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AUTHOR Schneider, Ann M.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to frame a preliminary report of a study of gender differences within the mentoring relationship associated with educational leadership. The study also examines the question of whether there is a difference in mentoring women, men, and minorities into positions of educational leadership. The research is based on interviews with 5 male mentors (professors of educational administration, superintendents, and principals) and 15 male and female proteges (superintendents, principals, professors, and other educational administrators). Findings indicate that men continue to be needed as mentors to women because women are not taking on the responsibility for mentoring other women. An analysis of the mentor-protege relationship suggests that mentoring women is a critical tasks that differs from mentoring men with similar career potential and aspirations. Findings also indicate that differences lie along gender lines rather than racial or ethnic background. (IAH)

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MENTORING WOMEN AND MINORITIES INTO POSITIONS OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: GENDER DIFFERENCES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MENTORING

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council of States on Inservice Education

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Ann M. Schneider, Ed. D.
Department of Educational Administration
State University of New York College at Brockport
Brockport, New York 14420

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Women and minorities remain seriously underrepresented in positions of educational leadership. Although women represent 69% of teachers they hold a mere 4% of positions as school superintendent. Women comprise 24% of all principalships. 30% of elementary level principals are women. 10% of secondary level principals are women. Racial distribution figures reflect similar inequities. 89% of all teachers are white. 2% of school superintendencies are held by African Americans:1% by Hispanics. 6% of Principals are African American : 2% are Hispanic. (Feistritzer,1988)

Women constitute approximately 54% of those who earn administrative certification. However, they are far less likely to hold an administrative position after two years than are the men of similar aspiration and education. Only 38% of the women find a position after two years.

Men continue to hold the traditional positions of power and influence in the field. The lack of visible, accessible female role models is often cited as a reason that women have not moved into administrative positions in greater numbers. Although same sex role models are important there is evidence that it is the mentor or sponsor that is critical in women's advancement (Covel,1978; Poll,1978; Stevenson,1974). Those women who have acquired administrative positions have sponsors or mentors. Mentors

have traditionally been white males who have not surprisingly selected white male men as protegees. The small number of women in positions with experience and expertise to mentor other women suggests that for some time men will continue to greatly influence access to opportunity.

Some men have been actively mentoring women, minorities and minority women in careers in educational administration. My own interest in mentoring relationships was sparked by the retirement of one such mentor who had influenced the development of several distinguished careers over the past two decades. My own experiences as I have moved from protegee to mentor have also stimulated an interest in effective mentoring. The purpose of this paper is to frame a preliminary report of a study of gender differences within the mentoring relationship. Is there a difference in mentoring women, men and minorities into positions of educational leadership?

Research Methodology.

Research began with open ended interviews of mentors in which the focus was on career development of protegees and interactions with protegees. Prompts included a history of the relationship and reports of critical incidents. N=5 mentors, 15 protegees. Mentors include professors of educational administration, superintendents and principals. Protegees included superintendents, principals, professors and others in unique

titles that are considered administrative positions. The population was limited to male mentors in this initial study. Protegees included men and women. Mentors were identified informally by professional associations, women administrators and networks of women in educational administration. The focus of this initial investigation was to identify mentors with some experience over at least a decade of time who also had mentoring relationships with several protegees actively engaged in educational administration. Protegees were interviewed to validate reconstructions of relationships. A minimum of two protegees per mentor were interviewed. The term protegee is interpreted to be an individual who is aspiring to a position in educational leadership and is not limited to individuals who pursue career patterns that are identical to mentors.

Results and Discussion

Men find themselves continuing to need to mentor women. Women aren't taking on the responsibility for mentoring other women. Mentors report that they began the process of mentoring through some recognition of need and interest in assisting a particularly promising individual. Those who consciously took on the charge of mentoring women and minorities report an expectation that the role as mentor would be temporary and soon those who attained access would take over the mentoring of gender and or racial/ethnic minority aspirants. Mentors report that within their

networks of professional relationships women are not taking on the responsibility of mentoring other women. There is some speculation on the reason for this lack of activity, but no firm basis for reporting at this time.

An analysis of mentor-protegee relationships suggests that mentoring women is a critical and arduous task which differs from mentoring men with similar career potential and aspirations. Further, the findings indicate that differences lie along lines of gender rather than racial or ethnic background.

Mentors observe:

1. **Women require more feedback and frequent monitoring to develop assurance**. Contact time was greater and individual contacts were longer in duration than with males. Women asked more questions related to readiness and skill development and were more interested in specific reviews of work and feedback on specific events than were men.
2. **Mentors needed to model and reinforce strategies more frequently with women**. Specific incidents included negotiating contractual issues, responding to conflict, developing career strategies and specific task completion.
3. **Women need more mentor initiated contact**. Although women

sought more feedback they were less likely to initiate opportunities for that feedback than male counterparts. Women protegees reported a reluctance to "bother" mentors "unnecessarily", yet expressed a need for more support and the assurance of the mentor.

4. **Relationships with women are longer in term**. When the men achieved career objectives they either moved on to other more appropriate mentors or failing to achieve their goals broke from the mentor relationship. In all cases mentors reported continuing relationships with women protegees at all stages of career development and ambition.
5. **Women remained in what may be labeled a readiness phase longer than men.** Women's fear of failure has often been addressed in the literature. Mentors report some evidence, that indeed in their relationships, women had a higher fear of failure and need more time to prepare, to "see themselves in the role" they aspired to.
6. **Women spend more time in each mentoring stage**. Using Gray's Mentor/Protegee Helping Relationship Model. Mentors and women protegees report significantly more behavior at the lower levels of the continuum toward autonomy(Gray, 1985).
7. **Men who mentor women must expect personal crisis and individual needs will surface in the mentoring relationship.** Mentors and female protegees report significantly more interaction

on personal issues many related to balancing demands of personal and professional obligations, personal and professional aspirations.

8. **Mentors report great satisfaction and personal pride in participation in the career development of a protegee.**

Implications for Practitioners

The inequities of gender and racial/ethnic distribution in educational administration continue to need to be addressed. The critical role of the mentor is still largely a task for white males who have achieved their personal career goals and are in positions of influence. Although men and women can be expected to differ as individuals in the needs they satisfy in the mentoring relationship, this preliminary data suggests a need to develop awareness of a full range of needs in the mentor /protegee relationship. Women seeking a mentor must consider that the relationship may be demanding of the mentor and must be aware of the needs and ambitions that may or may not be satisfied in a mentoring relationship. Men need to realize that mentoring a woman into a position of educational leadership can be a time consuming, long term commitment. Formalized mentor-protege programs need to address the range of needs of protegees.

Implications for further study

Clearly, the data collected in this study need to be expanded to include a larger population of mentors and protegees. Further, the relationships of gender alike mentor/protegee relationships needs to be fully explored to complete the range of the data collection. A significantly diverse data base may yield important aspects of the mentoring relationship which may enhance the mentor/protegee relationship and career development of all aspirants. Demographics suggest a significant turn over in school administration during the next eight years. It is in our best interests to provide supportive structures and access to the full range of potential school administrators. It is the ambition of this researcher to continue explorations which support access and the contribution of the mentor/protege relationship to career development.

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